

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE

Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Announcement for Program Funding

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

SUMMARY: The New Jersey State Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS-NJ), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture, is announcing availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications are accepted from all 50 States, Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) for projects located entirely within New Jersey. NRCS-NJ anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2011 will be approximately \$242,000. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration.

Funds will be awarded through a competitive process, as described in this notice. This notice identifies the objectives for CIG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects, and provides the instructions needed to apply to CIG. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

DATES: Applications must be received at the NRCS-NJ State Office by 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on **March 11, 2011**.

ADDRESSES: The address for hand-delivered, regular mail, express mail or overnight courier service for applications is: Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, 220 Davidson Avenue 4th Floor, Somerset NJ 08873.

For more information contact:

Janice Reid
Assistant State Conservationist - Programs
Natural Resources Conservation Service
220 Davidson Avenue 4th Floor
Somerset NJ 08873
Phone: (732) 537-6042
Fax: (732) 537-6095
Email: janice.reid@nj.usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). The Chief of NRCS delegated the responsibility for state-level CIG funding to the State Conservationist of each state or area. EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies, while leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) into NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides, and references or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Projects intended to formulate hypothesis do not qualify. CIG is to apply proven technology which has been shown to work previously. It is a vehicle to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success, and to be candidates for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

NRCS-NJ will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted to NRCS-NJ from eligible entities including federally recognized Indian tribes, State and local units of government, and non-governmental organizations and individuals. Applications are accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). The project area must be entirely within the boundaries of the State of New Jersey.

Applications with technically-based recommendations from the peer review groups will be forwarded to the State Conservationist, who will make the final selections.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development, field testing, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of either

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches

All proposed projects must also demonstrate environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity should:

- Make use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy use, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector;
- Adapt conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance; and
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. State Component

For FY 2011, CIG will offer the following funding categories:

1. *Ecosystems Markets*

- Development of regional partnerships, market infrastructure (such as ecosystem market registries), and integrated tools that facilitate the development of ecosystem markets.
- Design and demonstration of active ecosystem markets that result in real water quality and biodiversity trades.
- Development of models and monitoring systems to analyze economic and environmental effects of ecosystem markets.
- Design and implementation of multi-credit ecosystem service trades or demonstration of stacking/bundling ecosystem services.
- Development and testing of verification and certification protocols for ensuring environmental benefits from ecosystem market transactions.
- Design and use of conservation easements that incorporate multiple ecosystem markets.
- Development and sophistication of the "Farm of the Future" concept which incorporates ecosystem benefits options into a landowner's portfolio as effective new revenue streams.
- Demonstrate that agroforestry systems that can provide new revenue through ecosystem benefits.

2. *Preservation and Enhancement of Wildlife Habitat*

- Develop planning and decision aids to assess and maximize wildlife habitat value on land used to grow bio-fuel crops, including metrics that quantify units of potential habitat provided.
- Examine managed grazing as a habitat management tool, including metrics that quantify units of potential habitat provided.
- Develop fish screen technology and criteria for native aquatic species of conservation concern.
- Evaluate (and quantify) the benefits of controlling invasive species in forest habitats.

3. *Energy*

- Life cycle analyses for current conservation practices to assess the energy and fossil fuel implications associated with the use of the practice including analyzing the fossil fuel embedded in materials and agrochemicals.
- Innovative implementation systems to achieve greater use of energy audits including energy audits that address cropland in addition to buildings and equipment.

- Innovative on-farm energy conservation technologies.
- Innovative on-farm applications of renewable energy production technologies to displace fossil fuel energy.
- Sustainable biomass production, harvest, and handling technologies.
- Evaluate and demonstrate the use of fast-growing woody biomass species in agroforestry systems e.g., alley cropping, riparian forest buffers, windbreaks, etc.

4. Productivity and Environmental Health of Pastureland

- Develop improved assessment tools for comparing “Pastureland Condition Scores” to a reference condition for particular soil and climatic conditions.
- Implement the use of new or novel pasture management systems that can benefit water or air quality, greenhouse gases (GHGs), or pathogen loading and runoff, and metrics to quantify measurable units of improvement gained through the use of these systems.
- Use of grazing management to reduce non-point source pollution impact of confined winter feeding of beef cattle.

5. Productivity and Environmental Health of Forestland

- Develop improved assessment tools for economic decision-making and modeling of the transitional stages of different forestry/agroforestry practices.
- Implement the use of new or novel forest/agroforestry management systems that can benefit water or air quality, greenhouse gases (GHGs), or other ecosystem services, and metrics to quantify measurable units of improvement gained through the use of these systems.
- Implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance forest health including impacts from invasive species, pests, and fire.

6. Soil Quality

- Compare new technologies and methods (carbon fractions, enzymes, and other) for early prediction of soil quality degradation.
- Demonstrate conservation technologies to reduce soil erosion and minimize soil emissions of carbon in organic soils.
- Demonstrate technologies to restore and enhance the function and ecosystem services of degraded soils.
- Develop and implement a decision support system to aid land management decisions to enhance soil quality and other related ecosystem services.
- Application of continuous no-till crop production to enhance soil resources and other ecosystem services while maintaining crop productivity.
- Demonstrate agroforestry technology for enhancing soil health.

7. Nutrient Management

- Demonstrate feed management, or adoption of new or novel feedstuffs or additives, for manure nutrient reduction to reduce water and air quality problems, GHGs, or pathogen loading and runoff.
- Demonstrate active methods which improve on the capture of nitrogen in manure management systems and provide the opportunity to recycle the manure nitrogen in lieu of synthetic fertilizers.
- Demonstrate the use of water filtration or other medium as a method of reducing chemical compounds and odors from poultry operations and other livestock facilities.
- Development of new strategies to fully implement existing nutrient management conservation.
- Demonstrate methods to capture dissolved phosphorus from field runoff and subsurface drainage.

8. Program Outreach and Conservation Technology Transfer to Targeted Groups

- Technology transfer to, but not limited to, Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, Limited Resource Farmers, Land Grant Colleges and Universities, or Community-Based Organizations.
- Demonstration of new or novel technology that can easily and inexpensively be adopted by small-scale producers in order to address concerns or problems of the farmers, producers, or landowners.
- Demonstration of new or novel technologies that lead to significant management efficiencies in farm resource management from a systems perspective, including technologies that lead to demonstrated benefits to multiple ecosystem services.
- Examine resource conditions and land capabilities by social groups of the traditionally underserved groups and communities.
- Opportunities to work with universities and other institutions to develop technical training for Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Limited Resource Farmers, and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or entities servicing Beginning, Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers.

9. Sustainable and Organic Agriculture

- Produce an informational document for incorporating beneficial insect and pollinator habitat into the farm landscape to implement biological pest management strategies, including outcome metrics that describe expected habitat benefits.
- Produce an informational document on developing NRCS conservation plans to help organic producers meet the Organic System Plan conservation components for crop and livestock production.
- Analyze requirements to develop the Conservation Activity Plan "Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" to identify obstacles and limitation that discourage its use by farmers and provide recommendation to overcome obstacles and limitations.
- Analyze requirements to become a Technical Service Provider (TSP) in order to write a "Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" identifying obstacles and limitation that discourage individual from seeking TSP certification and provide recommendation to overcome obstacles and limitations.
- Expand the investigation of how conservation practices can be scaled to increase the adoption by small farms.
- Undertake an assessment of applicable conservation practices on organic production.

10. Specialty Crops

- Demonstrate conservation systems for specialty crops using seasonal high tunnels involving crop rotations, cover crops, conservation tillage, nutrient management, pest management, and irrigation systems.
- Develop and test new tools for measuring soil carbon where specialty crops are grown and on organic farms.
- Demonstrate technology to determine which crops help to suppress specific pests (weeds, insects, diseases) and the sequencing of the crops to minimize pests in specialty crop systems.
- Demonstrate conservation systems to include crop rotations, cover crops, organic mulches, conservation tillage, etc. in lieu of plastic culture.
- Determine the proper crops and the sequence of the crops to maximize the nutrient cycling in specialty crop production systems.
- Determine harvesting times and techniques that may minimize pest damage for the planned commodity.

- Demonstrate technology to determine the amount (acres) of habitat required to provide adequate pest control or match plant species to crops to attract desirable beneficial insect species.
- Demonstrate technology to determine how cover crops can be used for the production of specialty crops to include orchards and vineyards to provide erosion control, recycle crop nutrients, improve soil quality, pest control for the next crop in rotation, and other ecosystem services.
- Produce an informational document and evaluate criteria that helps NRCS determine when an Integrated Pest Management Plan has been developed and implemented to meet NRCS Pest Management Standard 595.
- Demonstrate technology on how agroforestry can be used for the production of specialty crops to provide erosion control, recycle crop nutrients, improve soil quality, improve pollinator habitat, and other ecosystem services.
- Identify conservation needs to support shellfish production and provide recommendations to address conservation needs.

11. Pollinator Habitat

A. Field Data for Conservation Planning

- Establish demonstration plantings of NRCS-recommended pollinator habitat seed/plant mixes to determine if these mixes are providing the expected pollinator habitat while also performing the intended conservation function.
- Document regional time of bloom of native plants and non-invasive, non-native plants in addition to monitoring the specific pollinators foraging upon these plants.
- Document the benefits to other wildlife species of improving pollinator habitat.
- Demonstrate effective methods of establishing and maintaining the most beneficial pollinator-friendly plant materials for specific regions of the state.
- Develop regional, crop-specific guidance specifying the vegetative species, landforms, and necessary acreage to support appropriate populations of managed and wild pollinators per unit area (e.g. acres) of pollinated crops (i.e., describe the components of the landscape).

B. Conservation Planning Needs

- Develop region-specific "recipes" of pollinator-friendly plant species to fulfill specific pollinator needs in both natural and agricultural situations.
- Develop strategies to integrate pollinator habitat management into the agricultural working lands matrix to promote holistic, ecosystem-based conservation plans that support the full suite of ecosystem services.
- Develop region-specific and crop/orchard-specific plans that address the nesting and foraging needs of crop/orchard-specific pollinators.
- Develop region-specific and crop/orchard-specific metrics that define and establish measurable units of pollinator habitat that can be used to develop pollinator trading/banking programs.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

A. State Component

For FY 2011, New Jersey is making available a State Component of CIG. Funding availability and application submission information for State competitions will be announced through www.grants.gov and on the NRCS State web site. New Jersey has approximately \$242,700 available for 2011 CIG grants, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a federally recognized Indian tribe, State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or individual.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. The recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. Of the applicant's required match (50%), a minimum of 25 percent of the total project cost must come from cash sources; the remaining 25 percent may come from in-kind contributions.

In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match. The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application. Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Additional information about matching funds can be found at the following link: 2 CFR 215.

B. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, imposes a \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between fiscal years 2008 and 2012. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation.
- Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to the NRCS CIG program manager in the semi-annual report. Direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA programs (EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, etc.) since this would be considered a duplicate payment.

C. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 USC 3839aa-1. Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

A person or legal entity will not be eligible to receive any benefit during a crop, fiscal, or program year, as appropriate, if the average adjusted gross non-farm income of the person or legal entity exceeds \$1,000,000, unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income.

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance and Wetland Compliance provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach (applicants should reference the appropriate NJ's EQIP Eligible Practices List at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>).

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, Administrative Contact, and Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION and SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following web sites: www.grants.gov and <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>.

2. Content and Format

Applications are required to contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered. Incomplete applications will not be considered. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project.

Applicants must submit one original signed copy of the full application, typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper. The text of the application should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, single-spaced, single-sided, with one-inch margins and pages numbered.

One electronic copy of the ten-page Project Description (item c below) in Microsoft Word format must also be included.

The format, requirements, limitations, and order of the application should be:

- a. Proposal Cover Sheet:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance)
Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov-Forms](http://www.grants.gov/Forms).
- b. Project Summary:** (Three (3) page maximum in length) Applicants must submit a brief description including the information below. An optional template titled Fiscal Year 2011 CIG Template is available on the NRCS-NJ CIG web site at: <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>.
 1. Entity name and contact information
 2. DUNS Number: A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. CIG applicants must obtain a DUNS Number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

3. **Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration:** The CCR is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR.
 4. **Project title**
 5. **Primary category and subcategory of the application** (refer to page 3 for a list)
 6. **Project start and end dates**
 7. **Project director name, and contact information** (including email)
 8. **Names and affiliations of project collaborators**
 9. **Project purpose**
 10. **Project area/location**
 11. **Project summary**
 12. **Project deliverables/products**
 13. **Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement**
- c. Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 10 pages in length. Pages in excess of the 10-page limit will be discarded and not evaluated. Bibliography, resumes, and references will be included in the page count for the project page limit.
1. **Project background:** Describe the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success of the project.
 2. **Project objectives:** Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how the project is innovative.
 3. **Project methods:** Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.
 4. **Location and size of project or project area:** Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
 5. **Producer participation:** Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP).
 6. **Project action plan and timeline:** Provide a **table** listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones and/or deliverables through project completion.
 7. **Project management:** Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, a brief description of their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and non-government entities. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
 8. **Project deliverables/products:** Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and payment.

In addition to specific deliverables, applications must include the following activities as deliverables:

- a. Semi-annual reports
 - b. Supplemental narratives to explain and support payment requests
 - c. Final report
 - d. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress. A thorough list and explanation of measurable performance items specific to the project will be used in the technical evaluation (refer to "CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria").
 - e. New technology and innovative approach fact sheet
9. **Benefits or results expected and transferability:** Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities, and explain how the results will be measured. Identify project beneficiaries (i.e., agricultural producers) by type, region, or sector. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.
10. **Project evaluation:** Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report. Grant recipients will be required to provide a semi-annual progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.
- d. **Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts:** Environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other specific resources protected by law, Executive Order, and agency policy. These resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, form NRCS-CPA-52, which is available at: NRCS-CPA-52.

Describe and assess the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. The description of the potential environmental and social impacts must address **all** potential **beneficial** and **adverse** impacts of the proposed action. A full description and assessment of the potential impacts to all environmental resources must be disclosed. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the environmental resources impacted either directly, indirectly (later in time), or cumulatively. One-line or short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable.

Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. The CPA-52 form can be used as a guide for the scope of environmental information that should be prepared for this section of the application.

In addition to describing impacts, applicants are required to assess the significance or degree of potential environmental impact of the proposed project on environmental resources. Applicants may consult with the NRCS-NJ Environmental Liaison concerning the scope of what should be addressed in this section of the application. A list of the Environmental Liaisons can be found on the following web site: Environmental Liaison

Note: Please be aware that applications for projects with potentially adverse impacts may need to be modified in order to achieve acceptable and beneficial levels of environmental impact. If projects cannot be modified, then there is a potential during the screening process that the application may not be selected.

- e. **Budget Information:** Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs) Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: Grants.gov-Forms or can be obtained from the NRCS-NJ State office. The budget form identifies a cumulative budget detailing the requested total support for each year and for the overall project period. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable statutes, regulations, Federal cost principles, and NRCS program guidelines and can be justified, as necessary, for the successful conduct of the proposed project. Applicants must also include a budget narrative to justify their budget requests (see "f" below). If claiming indirect costs, the applicant must provide an indirect cost rate agreement or indirect cost rate proposal as justification for the rate of indirect costs being claimed. Indirect costs are based on total Federal funds awarded and cannot exceed 15 percent.
- f. **Budget Narrative (maximum 9 pages):** In addition to the SF-424A, all applicants must provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. All budget categories for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget (SF-424A) and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind the Budget Form (SF-424A). Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items such as personnel, travel, equipment, etc. are essential to achieving project objectives. List all position titles and salaries, description of fringe, travel, supplies, list equipment and cost and list other cost items. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries such as resumes and description of duties. In addition to the information above, the subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. A budget narrative is also required for the matching portion.
- g. **Matching:** Applications must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third, non-federal parties.

The sources and amounts of all matching support from outside the applicant institution must be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support (matching support means a budget narrative broken down by year).

The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars, Cost Principles that apply to their entity for additional guidance, and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

Cash Match

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation, and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-Kind Match

"In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of in-kind include work done

by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and are verifiable.

For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant's organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution, and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

- h. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement:** Identify any previously awarded CIG projects involvement related to this proposal and any of its principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award, if applicable.
- i. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP (if EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible). The declaration must describe and certify the level of involvement by EQIP eligible producers.
- j. Certifications:** (Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs). All applications must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: Grants.gov-Forms or by contacting the State office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 CFR:
 - a. Part 3017, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)
 - b. Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying
 - c. Part 3021, Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)

3. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit applications in person or the address listed below. The address for submitting hand-delivered, regular mail, express mail or overnight courier service applications is:

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
220 Davidson Avenue 4th Floor
Somerset NJ 08873

Applications submitted by email or fax will not be considered.

4. Due Date

Proposals must be received at the NRCS-NJ State Office by 4:00 p.m. EST on **March 11, 2011**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

5. Acknowledgement of Submission

Applications received by the due date will be acknowledged with an electronic notification. Applicants who have not received an acknowledgement within 30 days of the submission must contact the NRCS program contact below.

CIG Program Contact:

Janice Reid
Assistant State Conservationist - Programs
Natural Resources Conservation Service
220 Davidson Avenue 4th Floor
Somerset NJ 08873
Phone: (732) 537-6042
Fax: (732) 537-6095
Email: janice.reid@nj.usda.gov

6. Funding Restrictions

Awardees may not use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; or,
- g. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person.

7. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR §3019.36. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 7 CFR §3019.2, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal Government use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically.

8. Environmental Review Requirements

The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and the NRCS regulation that implements NEPA at 7 CFR part 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for actions where the agency has discretion and control. Accordingly, NRCS financial assistance under the CIG program requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project to help NRCS determine the appropriate documentation required to comply with NEPA and NRCS regulations. If the application is selected for funding, the NRCS Program Contact and NRCS Environmental Liaison will coordinate with the selected applicant concerning documentation for compliance with NEPA. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement if required for NEPA compliance). Grant funding cannot be approved until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

9. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative thereof, if the representative's identity is made known and the representative signs a receipt for the application.

10. Review

Applications will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the bulleted topic identified by the applicant. Each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice including EQIP payment limitations. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

11. Anticipated Notification

Selected and not selected applicants will be notified via mail by **April 22, 2011**.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

There are two steps in evaluating CIG proposals. Proposals will be reviewed by a Technical Peer Review Panel. The Technical Peer Review Panel consists of NRCS state technical specialists, and technical specialists from other appropriately related Federal and State agencies, and non-Federal agencies. Applications will be reviewed based on the CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in Part VI.B below.

The Technical Peer Review Panel will forward their recommendations and the proposals to the State Conservationist, who will certify the peer review panel's recommendations, ensure that the application evaluations are consistent with program objectives, and make the final selections for funding.

B. Criteria for Application Evaluation

The peer review panel will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals:

Purpose, Approach, and Goals

- Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.

- Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
- Project outcome is clearly measurable.
- Potential for successful completion.
- Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered, and an acceptable significant level of improvement will be achieved.

Innovative Technology or Approach

- Project is innovative (state wide or local in nature).
- Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in proposal request announcement.

Project Management

- Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
- Project staff has technical expertise needed.
- Budget is adequately explained and justified.
- Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.

Transferability

- Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology or technologies.
- Potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas, including limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally underserved producers and communities.
- Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods.
- Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.).

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG awards are anticipated to be announced by **April 22, 2011**; all agreements are expected to be awarded by **May 27, 2011**. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification from the New Jersey State Conservationist. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process and financial review.

B. Environmental Review Requirements

Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS Environmental Liaison concerning what documentation will need to be prepared for compliance with NEPA and NRCS regulations in order to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation

required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to award of grant funds.

Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met. A list of the NRCS Environmental Liaisons can be found at the following Web address: [Environmental Liaison](#).

C. Grant Agreement

The Commodity Credit Corporation, through NRCS, will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP. The official notice will also indicate the need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement prior to starting work on the project. The grant agreement will include:

1. Project purpose
2. Project objectives
3. Project deliverables
4. Final project plan listing cooperators in the project and identifying the grant applicant and project manager
5. Project timelines and expected project completion date
6. Project progress and budget reporting requirements
7. Award amount and budget information
8. Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement
9. Role of NRCS technical oversight in the project
10. Reporting requirements including attendance at NRCS CIG showcase or comparable NRCS event during the period of the grant
11. Changes in project plans
12. Other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

CIG Program Contact:

Janice Reid
Assistant State Conservationist - Programs
Natural Resources Conservation Service
220 Davidson Avenue 4th Floor
Somerset NJ 08873
Phone: (732) 537-6042
Fax: (732) 537-6095
Email: janice.reid@nj.usda.gov

CIG Administrative Contact:

Carol Parker
State Administrative Officer
Natural Resources Conservation Service
220 Davidson Avenue 4th Floor
Somerset NJ 08873
Phone: (732) 537-6081
Fax: (732) 537-6096
Email: carol.parker@nj.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions, is available on the CIG web page at: <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS FISCAL YEAR 2011 FULL APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECK LIST

- ☐ **1. Proposal Cover Sheet:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☐ **2. Proposal Summary:**
 - a. Entity name and contact information
 - b. DUNS Number
 - c. Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration
 - d. Project title
 - e. Primary category and subcategory of the application (refer to page 3 for a list)
 - f. Project start and end dates
 - g. Project director name, and contact information (including email)
 - h. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 - i. Project purpose
 - j. Project area/location
 - k. Project summary
 - l. Project deliverables/products
 - m. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
- ☐ **3. Project Description:** (10 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)
 - a. Project background
 - b. Project objectives
 - c. Project methods
 - d. Location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
 - e. Producer participation
 - f. Project action plan and timeline
 - g. Project management
 - h. Project deliverables/products
 - i. Benefits or results expected and transferability
 - j. Project evaluation
- ☐ **4. Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts**
- ☐ **5. Budget Information:** Submit Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs
- ☐ **6. Budget Narrative:** Submit a detailed budget narrative (maximum of 9 pages).
- ☐ **7. Matching Information.**
- ☐ **8. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement.**
- ☐ **9. Declaration Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility:**
- ☐ **11. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.

New Jersey Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Announcement for Program Funding:

Signed this 28th day of January in Somerset NJ.



Janice Reid
Acting State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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